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ABSTRACT

The Internet has a wide array of information sources that the career counselor and student can choose from, depending on their goals. The Internet provides opportunities for job search as well as information for people interested in career clarification, career inventories, resume writing, and interviewing. This article focuses on evaluating web-based career information and explores ideas for developing that information for career counseling utilization with high school and college. Guidelines are provided to assist the user with understanding, validating, and checking the accuracy of information as they go through the decision-making process and the information selection process. "The Four W's" (who, what, when, where) are explained as they relate to information-source evaluation. A form for assessing web sites is provided. Types of information available and tips about how to tell if there is research backing the ideas are discussed under "The Web: Search and Seizure." (EMK)

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ED 424 512

Career Counseling through The Internet

Mary-Beth Muskin

Abstract:
The focus of this article is on the evaluation of available career information and ideas for developing that information for career counseling utilization with High School and College students.

Why use the internet as a job search tool? At the 1997 American Management Association Conference several convincing reasons for utilization of the internet were cited. These reasons include the following statistics;

* 86% of all companies surveyed listed their positions via some form of electronic source.
* 56% used the internet more than another electronic source to find candidates and list jobs.
* 37% used electronic resume books
* 41% used the internet regularly to identify candidates
* 79% of the companies surveyed said that they have corporate websites.

(NACE's Spotlight, 1998)

Based on the survey results, the internet is a necessary source that provides a whole host of opportunities for job search information. Additionally, it was found that the web also offers a myriad of opportunities for individuals that are interested in career clarification, career inventories, resume writing, and interviewing. The artful, web oriented career counselor has the opportunity to expand client offerings by incorporating this vast array of information as they work toward assisting individuals.

Legitimacy and Accuracy of Information:

As we move into the computer age, children as well as adults are increasingly turning to the web as a resource. Information and articles found on the web are viewed as truth, and cited and used as resources. However, rarely are guidelines given to assist the user with understanding validation and accuracy of information as they go through the decision making process and ultimately article/information selection process. Caruso sites the Four W's as a way of evaluating information found on web sites. The four W's include:

1. Who wrote the site? (author qualifications, site sponsorship, contact information)
2. What are they saying on the site? (does information appear factual, nonbiased, age appropriate, costs involved)
3. When was the site created? (currency of the site)
4. Where is the site from? (what server houses the site, is it reputable)

(Caruso 1997)

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The four W's give the user a starting point as they attempt to evaluate the legitimacy of a site. In the identification and utilization of websites in support of the counseling process the counselor has an obligation to ensure that the sites used are high quality sites that have been updated and are current. The use of written information in the past left little doubt of authorship and authenticity. However, using the web in this manner is still in many ways uncharted and while it can certainly enhance the counseling process in the area of career exploration and ultimately job search it is the counselors responsibility to ensure that the information shared with clients is accurate, reliable, current, and appropriate. This can be a challenge because of the rapid way in which information and sites change on the web

Using the four W's as a guide a Website Assessment was developed to assist counselors and clients with the process of evaluating websites. Key considerations in the evaluation process are whether the website is appropriate for the age group, and whether the information is portrayed in an accurate, useful manner. Table 1 provides an example of a Website Assessment Form.

Table 1

WEBSITE ASSESSMENT FORM

Name: _____

Date: _____

Website: _____ Title: _____

Author: _____ Copyright: _____

Directions: Please rate the validity of this site by responding to each of the following questions:

	Extremely				Not at all
	1	2	3	4	5
I. **Format**					
a. Is the site easy to use?					
b. Is the information readily available?					
c. Is it clear and understandable?					
d. Does advertising get in the way?					
II. **Credibility**					
a. Is the creator knowledgeable?					
B. Is the site trying to sell something?					
C. Does it meet your needs?					
D. Is the information current?					
E. Has it received rewards/ acknowledgement?					

Website Assessment Form (Continued) ...

	Extremely				Not at all
	1	2	3	4	5
III. **Choices**					
a. Are there many options within the site?					
b. Does it have interactive capabilities?					
IV. **Other**					
a. Is it fun to use?					
B. Is it interesting?					

Will you use this site again? _____

What is this site best used for? _____

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The Web, Search and Seizure:

The web has a wide array of information sources that the counselor and student can choose from dependent on the counselors/clients goal. If the goal of the session is to assist the client in reviewing their interests Career Assessments are available. Many of these assessments are standardized valid instruments however, many are also simply ideas people built a website around. When using Career Assessments it is important to look for the sites that share research that has been done to support their assessment and reliability and validity information about that assessment. Once the client has developed career goals the web offers opportunities for research and networking in specific career areas. This will assist the student in becoming familiar with the requirements needed for them to achieve their goal. Research networking also affords the opportunity to take a closer look at the chosen profession and possibly determine pros and cons. On-line magazines can also assist the client with their search to learn more about the desired profession. The client through the information gleaned has to decide what the desired career requires in terms of education and training and if the additional requirements are in line with their personal direction.

Once the client has decided that they are ready to move forward it is time to formalize a resume. The resume process is quite cumbersome particularly for the first time resume writer. The type of desired resume is dependent on whether the student is continuing educationally, or entering the workplace. Communication tips and resume management skills are available on the web. These sites assist the client with everything from lists of adjectives to popularly used formats.

The search for universities, community colleges, and trade schools can also take place on the web. There are a lot of prepackaged programs avalilable through High schools however, most univerisities, community colleges and trade schoools have web pages that give the basic information about the school and the requirements for entrance.

The actual job search can also be facilitated by accessing the web. There are job sites that specialize in part-time employment as well as career opportunities. This information can be gleaned through job data banks, general employment sites and specific company listings. Employment sites are often sponsored by state, regional, and national labor and employment organizations. As with other areas the validity of the site often hinges on who is sponsoring the site. Utilization of the web in job search activities offer excellent opportunities to remain current in a rapidly changing job market. An obsolete job search site defeats the purpose of using the web in this area.

Summary:

There is so much information available that using the web can be overwhelming if not approached properly. Using the web to access career information provides counselors within the school/university setting the opportunity to create current, useful career guidance lessons. Assisting students with an understanding of how to access this information through utilization of the web creates the opportunity for the development of life skills that will benefit the student. After one goal of the counseling and guidance process is to create independent, resourceful individuals. Career counseling through the web can be taught to large or small groups of students with the individual work done in

the personal determination of goals and career direction. The web when used appropriately is truly a valuable counseling and guidance tool in our ever changing society.

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